



Testimony of:
Sarah Gerstenzang
Executive Director
NYS Citizens' Coalition for Children

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Subcommittee on Human Resources

For the hearing on:
Improving Programs Designed to Protect At-Risk Youth
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I would like to thank the Subcommittee for the opportunity to submit testimony in considering improvements in the reauthorization of two federal child welfare programs. I write to you as the Executive Director of the New York State Citizens' Coalition for Children (NYSCCC), a statewide nonprofit that provides information, support and advocacy for foster and adoptive families, and as a foster/adoptive parent. My testimony will focus on the need for federal funding for post adoption services. First, I would like to strongly endorse the testimony of Nicole Dobbins, Executive Director of Voice for Adoption. NYSCCC shares the views expressed in her testimony. Second, I would like to share excerpts from three emails that I have received from families (I have removed identifying information):

- 1. I have two granddaughters that were adopted a few years ago and there are some serious family issues occurring. Is there any support in New York State that can assist me in helping them?*
- 2. I have been to many of your May conferences in Albany and have 3 adopted through foster care and live in [county redacted]. My oldest daughter who is 14 is starting to use drugs, alcohol and is very sexually active. It's a long story and the same as many you have heard before. We are considering possibly sending her to a therapeutic boarding school such as [school redacted]. I am wondering if you can steer me in the direction of any financial aid programs for this type of therapy. My husband and I earn over 100,000 annually on paper, but barely make our bills because of expenses.*
- 3. I hope you can help me. My 13 year old daughter just punched me in the chest in the midst of an argument. This brought to a head ongoing problems we have been having. She is adopted and clearly does not wish to continue living with me, her adoptive mother. I am out of work and cannot leave her alone in the apartment. I have taken away her apartment key since finding a 15 year old boy half naked hiding in her closet.*

I can no longer keep her safe nor make her happy. She is clearly angry and resentful. She longs for her other family that gave her up in [country redacted]. I am unemployed and it is becoming more and

more difficult to just get through the day. We almost went to the police yesterday. Can you please give me some direction? I've tried social workers, psychiatrists (she was diagnosed with depression and oppositional defiant disorder), pills, etc. and nothing seems to work. Can you please help?

Post adoption services are for families who have a child who was adopted – privately, internationally or from foster care. Most children who are adopted do very well. However, some children have emotional, behavioral, medical and/or educational problems as a result of the prior abuse and/or neglect they suffered. Problems can be short-term or on-going, and parents need help so that their children can live safely at home. Essential services include information and referral, support groups, respite, education and counseling by therapists with specialized training.

NYS has previously funded some post adoption services (13 programs in 20 counties) through TANF. But this funding ended in December 2010. Last year, 451 NYS adoptive parents and professionals responded to a NYSCCC survey assessing the needs of NYS adoptive families. Significant problems were noted by participants in accessing services, especially therapists who were knowledgeable about adoption and the impact of abuse and neglect on development. Many of the parents expressed that they felt abandoned at a time when they were desperate for help. It is a tragedy for the child, family and community when parents can't keep their children safely at home.

Post adoption services would save money **by increasing the numbers of children who are adopted¹, decreasing the numbers of children who enter or re-enter foster care² and decreasing the number of children who enter residential treatment³**. More information is available at [nysccc.org: http://nysccc.org/adoption/post-adoption-services/](http://nysccc.org/adoption/post-adoption-services/).

¹ The Bridges to Health program (B2H) is a very good example of how when services are provided to children and their families the rate of adoption from foster care to adoption increases. B2H ensures that children with significant medical and psychological needs receive services after an adoption. Data from B2H shows that by providing better supports, the percentage of children with a goal of adoption in NYS increased from 26% to 35.5%. If we provided supports to families adopting children with fewer challenges and assumed the same increase in the percentage of children with a goal of adoption (and the achievement of that goal), \$19,593,930 would be saved each year!

² Children are entering foster care (foster care, international & domestic private adoption) **after** being adopted because they could not be maintained in their families. The federal child welfare reporting system (AFCARS) now requires states to report on whether children in foster care were previously adopted. Although not all NYS counties have complied with this reporting requirement, for the less than one third of cases where the data was entered, 425 children now in foster care were previously adopted (personal communication with the NYS Office of Children and Family Services 4/27/2010).

³ One example is the Post Adoption Resource Center (PARC) at Parsons Child and Family Center in Albany serves six surrounding counties. Based on family reports and conservative estimates, 58 families had a child at risk of placement in 2009. However, only six of the children entered a residential treatment center. Post adoption services kept 52 children out of residential care at an annual savings of more \$4 million dollars for only 6 counties – and at a cost of only \$225,000 to operate PARC.